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Accountable Talk as a Strategy to Increase Reading Comprehension for All Children

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Accountable Talk as a Strategy to Increase Reading Comprehension for All Children

by

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Education of The College at Brockport, State
University of New York, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

This research explores the implementation of the accountable talk strategy in reading workshop. The purpose of this research is to better support all students by implementing the strategy in the hope that it will not only improve oral language development, but impact reading comprehension. Data were collected for this study over a period of 4 weeks using the students' reading assessments, transcribed audio recordings, and observation notes of guided reading groups. Data were analyzed for how the students engage with the accountable talk strategy and how the strategy will impact students' reading comprehension during reading sessions.

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Introduction

As I sit in yet another staff meeting where the discussion turns to a focus on data linking low test scores with our students living in poverty, I find myself thinking of my teaching experiences both in the past and present with students from poverty and their academic achievement. Many questions come to mind, but the main focus being the students, who do not have a choice in the matter but seem to be suffering academically, especially in relation to literacy skills. This brought me back to a study I learned about in my undergraduate program where Hart and Risley (1995) “determined a close relationship between differences in family environment and children’s development. The conventional conclusion was that children’s cognitive development (measured by psychometric intelligence and verbal ability tests) depends on parental socioeconomic status (SES), especially on wealth” (Rindermann & Baumeister, 2015, p. 133). This information is important as children during this early stage of emergent literacy are already behind other children that are not living in poverty. These impacts on cognitive development transfer to level of a child’s speech, vocabulary and then further into reading and writing making these students at a disadvantage early on which is hard to come back from when they start school.

In further thinking about all my students’ literacy development, I began to focus on the trend I see with many of my students, not limited to those living in poverty, and the struggle with reading comprehension skills. In teaching emergent literacy skills I consistently see growth being made as students learn to decode words, but their lack of understanding of the text and beyond is not developing at the same rate. Dooley & Matthews (2009) look at findings which focus on the significance of “synthetic phonics instruction as a precursor to comprehension instruction due to an underlying theory that early literacy is most dependent on phonemic

understandings” (p.273). This perspective derives from the view that prioritizes a sequence of phonics teaching before comprehension. On the opposing side, Dooley (2009) believes comprehension happens at the same time as any other early reading skills and therefore allows young readers to read for meaning in a book as they are able to have points of understanding and connection. I agree with Dooley, and therefore I would like to implement the strategy of accountable talk as a means to improve oral language development skills in an effort to increase reading comprehension skills for all students. If this strategy works it would help to close some of the gaps for those students who are coming from low SES homes in regard to literacy development.

Topic and Research Problem

Due to the rigor of the Common Core standards across our nation, emergent literacy being the background of reading development has never been so important. According to Kainz & Vernon-Feagans (2007), “the development of reading is based on a social context, and when any part of that context (health, language development, family) is negatively affected, a child’s development in reading is at risk; a trend seen in children living in poverty” (p. 407). Teachers are faced with trying to bridge the gap of different literacy needs in a classroom, but when the playing field starts off uneven due to outside factors such as low SES, it is hard to bring students up to where they need to be to be successful within the grade level standards.

Our students need to have a strong background in reading as it affects every part of their school literacies as they must make sense of and comprehend many different types of text. Our students also need to have strong vocabulary skills in conjunction with the rigor and standards of the assessments given in schools in connection with higher level thinking. There has been a link

between poverty and academics for some time, but my focus will be on reading development in emergent literacy as this is the ground students will need to stand on as they grow in learning.

Rationale

Seeing my students struggle due to the rigor of the Common Core Standards and their ability to gather meaning from text led me to seek more information on ways I may better support my students. I have been able to observe reading comprehension struggles span across content areas, as making meaning from text is a skill students need to have across content areas. The goal is for students to be more than word callers (Hamilton & Shinn, 2003). Instead we as teachers want for the words and the words linked together in sentences to mean something to our students. When students gain comprehension skills we start to see that ever so special moment where the light bulb goes off and things start to click for our students. These are the times where we witness our students getting swept away and getting buried in a good book. The bridge between decoding and comprehension skills provides the students with the power to gain meaning and make those solid connections (Dooley, 2011).

Finding ways to help all students is important for teachers. Accountable talk is a strategy that touches on many areas, such as oral language and vocabulary development, speaking and listening skills, and may have a positive impact on reading comprehension. Therefore it should be looked into more deeply through research to see if in fact it helps all students in these areas, especially students who may have oral language gaps due to SES and their situated literacies. Accountable talk strategy makes the most out of reading, thinking, and talking opportunities, in which students should come out of these experiences not only as stronger meaning-makers who can orchestrate their own conversations and negotiate with others for the purpose of constructing meaning, but as critically aware thinkers who value the thinking of others (Nichols, 2006) .

Purpose

My purpose is to better support all students by implementing accountable talk as a strategy in my second grade classroom in the hope that it will not only improve oral language development, but impact reading comprehension. Stanovich (1989) claims literacy helps students acquire skills in all academic areas making literacy a necessary academic skill; therefore by investigating children's talk as a part of pedagogical strategy-accountable talk-and the impact it might have on reading comprehension, this knowledge could have implications for students' comprehending academic texts within content areas.

According to Wolf, Crosson, & Resnick (2005), "given the assumption that social interaction supports and increases cognitive development in students' learning, it follows that discourse-based instructional approaches facilitate effective reading comprehension instruction" (p. 1). These instructional approaches confirm that reading comprehension is a shared process where the teacher and students together create meaning from text (Palincsar, 2003). These approaches stress the importance of the teacher engaging in dialogue with the students to model the conversation and help provide support for the students as they take their understanding of a text deeper than the surface. Then the goal is for students to be able to take over and lead the discussion as they become more comfortable with talking about text (Wolf, Crosson, & Resnick, 2005). I wish to implement this strategy into my daily instruction in the hope that it will help all of my students increase their reading comprehension skills, but specifically those who are struggling with oral language development and reading comprehension.

I would like to take the research linking oral language development with reading comprehension and make connections to current research in regards to the accountable talk strategy and determine if in fact students' reading comprehension is positively impacted

regardless of socioeconomic status, then this strategy could be implemented in classrooms to help students from poverty gain success in oral language skills, and reading comprehension to help close the gaps.

Research Questions

- How might the introduction of “Accountable Talk” strategy impact students’ reading comprehension?
- How do 2-grade students engage in “Accountable Talk” during reading workshop?

Review of Literature

The following literature review summarizes key points of reading development and the importance oral language development plays in regard to reading comprehension. Research on the “accountable talk” strategy shows how implementing the strategy might improve oral language skills thus promoting gains in reading comprehension. The review also looks at social constructivist theory and situated literacies that influence student learning and development.

Oral Language Development

Language development begins before infants even learn to speak. Listening to the world around them allows them to pay attention to sounds and slowly begin to crack the code of language. They start out by processing and then mimicking speech sounds. The ability to communicate through language starts from birth as children pick up sounds, and the uses of language and vocabulary through interactions with others around them, suggesting literacy development is linked to a child’s situated literacies and funds of knowledge (Gee, 1996). “Funds of knowledge refers to historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (Moll, 1992, p. 133). This is important as we need to have a perspective of the difference between

students and their different funds of knowledge; the community, culture and family that the child is immersed in affects the student's oral language development and the vocabulary the child uses.

The idea of situated literacies turns away from the traditional sense that literacy is only a cognitive or psycholinguistic skill or ability or something that a reader or a writer possesses, and instead is viewed as a social activity or practice, something that people do with texts. Literacy practices are situated in particular events which are embedded in literacy domains such as school, work and communities (Gee, 1996). These are important lenses with which to look at students' oral language development as their differences in experiences, and time spent on literacy activities help shape the foundation of emergent literacy.

Conventional reading comprehension is characterized by the RAND Reading Study Group (2002) "as the transaction between the reader, the text, and the activity (or purpose) that exists within a sociocultural context. This proposes that meanings are made as readers (with background knowledge and strategic approaches to texts) enter into situations" (Dooley, 2010, p. 120). Dooley (2010) continues that before conventional reading practices begin children are able to make meaning and comprehend text. Dooley (2011) went on to say that children make meaning through the shared experiences with a book and a caretaker, and over time through these literacy rich experiences the child learns the purpose of a book. "If the purpose is to express meaning, the child eventually learns to expect that purpose and seek meaning (i.e., comprehend) with the text" (Dooley, 2001, p. 172). These beginning instances structure the need to gain understanding as a child develops in emergent literacy.

According to many researchers (Saracho & Spodek, 2007; NICHD, 2005; Poe, Burchinal & Roberts, 2004; Menyuk & Chesnick, 1997), oral language is thought of as the base for early

reading where children not only make meaning, but engage with syntax and phonology as a gateway to emergent literacy. Emergent literacy is viewed as the foundation of behaviors and ideas that support and develop into conventional literacy (Dooley, 2010). As a foundation for reading development, children use language to draw on meaning; therefore children need to show command of phonology, vocabulary, syntax and conversation as points of oral language development. “Learning to read written English is influenced by children’s oral language development as well as their experience and understanding about written language structures, which then directly relates to reading comprehension skills” (Hill & Launder, 2010, p. 240).

Current research shows that there is a large gap in the abilities of “children from low-income and middle class families” (Allington, 2012, p. 3). Luther (2012) suggests,

“In order to form a strong educational foundation, it is imperative that basic fundamental skills are fostered early in young children’s lives. In no other content area is this more important than in reading; without a strong understanding of literacy skills in the elementary grades, students often struggle to read proficiently as they grow older” (p. 36).

Looking more specifically to one area of reading, research shows the difference between vocabulary growth of children from professional families and those from families living in poverty. The amount of words in each child’s vocabulary consisted of words also recorded in their parent’s vocabularies, which shows the link of vocabulary development between children from low socioeconomic households versus a high socioeconomic household (Hart & Risley, 2003). This directly connects to the amount and level of words or vocabulary that the children are entering school with, which shows a gap in development before these children even start

school. Hart and Risley's (2003) research shows the direct relation to oral language in reading development; therefore our students coming from poverty are coming in at a disadvantage and are struggling to catch up, as they found that a child's vocabulary at age 3 has a strong correlation with early reading development and reading comprehension at the end of third grade. Not only is speaking and listening a standard based on the Common Core Curriculum, which is affected by a student's oral language ability, but oral language is also one of the foundations of learning how to read. Students are still coming in at different levels and are expected to meet the standards in reading and speaking, when some are missing a strong foundation in oral language skills in the dialect and registers valued by the school (Hill & Launder, 2010). These children now are on an unlevelled playing field, where the standards remain the same for all students, and since oral language plays a large role in reading development, the disadvantage continues and has the possibility to affect the students through their academic career. According to Gollnick and Chinn (2009), children living in poverty are more likely to drop out of high school. Without graduating and gaining the skills necessary to continue in the working world, it becomes hard for these former students to find a job that will allow them to break the cycle of poverty that they have been submersed in.

Reading Comprehension

According to Tovani (2009), reading is thinking, and when we read we rely on comprehension as a thoughtful process where we can make meaning and gain understanding from text. Students need instruction that shows them how to read and think about their reading, but they also need the oral language skills to be able to discuss their meaning making and show understanding of a text. Dooley & Matthews (2009) believe meaning making connections in

comprehension is linked to development, and this development occurs simultaneously with other early reading skills and requires students to be able to look for meaning within text starting at a young age.

Students can make meaning by connecting their own personal experiences as they make meaning from the text. This connects again to a student's situated literacies, and their experiences outside of school. Street (2003) believed that literacy is more than a skill, and instead it is a social practice, therefore emergent comprehension is influenced by children's early experiences and we can conclude that we can use group learning to better help build development in literacy skills. Some of these important influences on emergent comprehension as referenced by Dooley (2011) are a child's "development, relationships and social interactions, and experiences with multiple texts and multimodal symbol systems", all of which can be done in a classroom to outweigh the differences in the home lives and situations of the students (p. 169).

"We must see reading comprehension as a collaborative process in which students become detectives and investigate the text, grapple with and then clarify ideas in the text" (Mikyung, Crosson, & Resnick 2005, p. 28). Reading comprehension skills are best taught through, Reciprocal Teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1984), Questioning the Author (Beck, McKeown, Hamilton, & Kucan, 1997), and Collaborative Reasoning (Chinn & Anderson, 1998) and being that these practices are aligned with process, these practices require students engaging in dialogue to make meaning and deepen understanding of the text. In reference to literary meaning making, we look to Rosenblatt (1938/1965), as she suggested that "each reader approaches texts with unique qualities, knowledge, and purposes and strives to construct meanings with texts that may or may not adhere to an author's intended meaning" (p. 170). Rosenblatt proposed that

readers look for meanings that are socially consistent or, follow a form of socially constructed meaning; therefore, no one will be able to take away the exact meaning from a text. “Rosenblatt’s theory is now viewed as synonymous with comprehension” (Dooley, 2011, p.170).

Students must show their understanding verbally or through written expression, and in order for students to express their thinking they need to be taught how to share their individual ideas, and allowed to practice with others through conversation. They can only then have meaningful conversations based on their experiences which offer new ways or perspectives in which to look at the text. In having these important conversations students may move in many directions, as together through discussion they make sense of their own ideas in regards to the text as well as another’s idea, one that may be different than their own.

Accountable Talk

Accountable talk is a strategy that gets students talking with one another, listening to one another and building off one another’s conversation to further develop oral language skills and vocabulary. This strategy asks students to respond to and further develop what others have said, which requires engaged listening and evidence from another person’s words. It is important to distinguish the difference between communication and dialogue. As Bohm (1996) explains,

“communication is a telling of one’s ideas, making one’s thinking clear to another” (p.

2). Bohm continues by suggesting that “dialogue is coming to an intellectual exchange, willing to see and hear something new in the exchange, and actually creating a newer, stronger understanding because of the exchange... becoming a true negotiation of meaning” (p.

2). Through this dialogue students understand the importance of thinking independently, but then gain the ability to make connections to one another, and in turn become literate

communities as the transition of thinking between students create a new understanding (Alexander, 2010).

Through dialogic teaching, teachers model specific language and sentence stems using the accountable talk strategy which will help students move beyond superficial comprehension to create lasting, meaningful, purposeful learning (Alexander, 2010). Using only question/answer instruction can cause the students to mimic one another or repeat the teacher instead of coming up with their own response. With the implementation of the accountable talk strategy the student can summarize what another is saying and then build on their thinking to expand and develop their own thinking (Heyman, 1983). The importance of implementing authentic questions in classroom helps discussions lead somewhere, because the student's answers and contributions to the discussion can be built upon rather than right or wrong, therefore students take leaps in discussion as they are talking out their thoughts and building on others thoughts (Heyman, 1983). Through this strategy students are talking to learn and learning to talk, which directly impacts oral language, and by expanding a student's vocabulary it gives them opportunities to hear and use complex vocabulary from others.

Students develop vocabulary as they hear new words in context and have the opportunity to apply them as a means to deepen understanding. This creates opportunities for them to use the words again in meaningful ways (Alexander, 2010). This strategy requires the student to think in relation to another person's thoughts rather than just reporting what another said, and this becomes a meaningful conversation where knowledge and perspectives are developed along the vocabulary in which context the conversation is being held in (Alexander, 2010). By expanding vocabulary and oral language through talk students also engage in critical thinking and in turn

create literate habits of mind to build comprehension, which in turn will help to close any gaps students may have.

When we think about language and how one uses language we can think about it through a social context, and that the way people have conversations or use specific words can be related to their social literacies. It is important to look at the relationship between context and meaning in regard to the makeup of the students in a classroom, and how their situated literacies and background knowledge play a large role in the ability for all in the classroom to make sense of and understand another's spoken discourse. This idea falls in line with the social constructivist view that students need to learn in groups with other students and abilities to better support their zone of proximal development. Vygotsky (1978), believed that social interaction was crucial to learning and cognitive development and to gain those rich experiences in learning one could not do it alone. Nyikos & Hashimoto (1997) state that research shows students gain opportunities to further their development by interacting with others who are more proficient, which can help one another's potential grow. Therefore, "more capable students can provide peers with new information and ways of thinking so that all parties can create new meanings of understanding" (Nyikos & Hashimoto, 1997, p. 507).

The zone of proximal development has been defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Through this notion the teachers would model the accountable talk strategy, and then allow students to use it in their interactions with others, and then by themselves as they are encouraged to talk about and make meaning from text it will display if they in fact could use the strategy independently to help them learn. This strategy

being implemented falls in line with Vygotsky (1978), as he argued that “knowledge and intelligence reside not solely in heads, but, rather, are distributed across the social practices (including language practices) and the various tools, technologies, and semiotic systems that a given community of practice uses in order to carry out its characteristic activities” (Gee, 1998, p. 2).

The goal is to build a community of learners that are able to read, think, talk about their thinking and then to construct purposeful conversations with others where they are able to construct meaning. The accountable talk strategy will change and shape how the students use the language of thought.

Methodology

This study focuses on the introduction of the accountable talk strategy into my daily instruction to determine if it positively impacts reading comprehension through the development of oral language skills. Data were collected for a period of 4 weeks and contains different collection methods. Data were collected using the students’ Developmental Reading Assessments (DRA) as pre and post assessments, transcribed audio recordings, and observation notes of guided reading groups and learning episodes.

Participants

The participants in this study were selected because they are all students in my second grade classroom for the 2015-2016 school year. The class is made up of 12 boys and 10 girls, and the students are mostly Caucasian, with the exception of one student who is of mixed race. All students speak English as their first language. There are students who come from different socioeconomic statuses and 4 students specifically who receive free and reduced lunch. There are 5 students who are reading below grade level at this time and receive Academic

Intervention Services (AIS) every day for 40 minutes. I have one student, “Kylie,” who entered school this year for the first time ever from a home schooled environment, and is well below standards in all academic and social areas. I am the sole instructor giving instruction in all academic areas including; Math, Science, Social Studies and English Language Arts. The student participants were already in leveled guided reading groups, and they continued to be in these groups during the data collection. These groups can change based on students’ reading development throughout the data collection period (still unsure about if this will happen)

Setting

The setting for this study is in second grade classroom in a suburban elementary school that includes grades k-4, and is located in New York State. The environment is colorful and welcoming, filled with positive quotes and student work. The rows are situated in three horizontal rows due to space in the room. There is a classroom library where the kids have the opportunity to sit on a colorful carpet with a pillow and get buried in a book. Our guided reading groups are held at a kidney bean shaped table where we have groups ranging from 2 students to 6 per group at a time.

According to the NYSED’s Student Information Repository System, looking at the demographics for the 2014-2015 school year there was a total of 443 students attending the school, 52% which are male, and 48% female. The majority of the population is White at 84%. The Multiracial population stands at 6%, the Hispanic population at 5%, the African American population at 4%, and the Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander population is at 2%. Out of the enrolled students 2% are limited English proficient, 8% are students with disabilities, and 25% of the students are economically disadvantaged.

Positionality

Who I am affects my role as a teacher researcher in the classroom. In using my race, class, gender, education, and personal beliefs as a framework it will help will me to have a critical lens on my research. I am a married, white woman in my 30's who is a mother to a young girl. I grew up in a working class household, and my parents were the first in their families to go to college. My parents both graduated with a Bachelor's Degree from Niagara University. My father works as a store manager for a tire company, and my mother was a nurse for over 20 years, and now is more recently a case manager for the hospital.

I graduated from The College at Brockport with a Bachelor's Degree in English Literature and received certification in both Early, and Childhood Education ranging from kindergarten through sixth grade. I also received my Special Education Certification for grades 1-6. I am currently a second year teacher working in a second grade classroom, in a suburban district. English is my only language and I am a graduate student in a Literacy MEd program.

I believe that all students should receive what they need regardless of their home situation and the gaps that they enter the classroom with, and that is my job to best support all my students in the most effective way possible.

Methods of Data Collection

As the participant observer I was able to observe how the accountable talk strategy impacted students' reading comprehension, as well as making instructional choices in reflection of the accountable talk strategy. I used copies of my lesson plans and modeled and implemented different parts of the strategy to scaffold instruction.

I also was able to look at how the students are making meaning during accountable talk. In order to look deeply into what students are saying, I decided to record and transcribe

observations of comprehension conversations during guided reading and full group discussions where I then assessed comprehension of consented students. Students were also able to show comprehension through written responses about a text to determine comprehension, which I then transcribed. I made sure to white out all students' names to ensure confidentiality and use pseudonyms for transcribed conversations from recordings.

Data were also collected using the students' Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) from December 2015 as a starting point in regard to their level of reading comprehension skill. The comprehension assessment in the DRA includes being able to recite information from the text (in text), the ability to infer the author's meaning (inferential) and the ability to combine background knowledge and new ideas from the text to deepen meaning (connections beyond the text). This acted as a pre-assessment giving me a base point to start from. I was then able to follow up with another DRA at the end of the 4 weeks, which acted as a post-assessment to determine if in fact the accountable talk strategy had a positive impact on student growth.

I also wanted to look at how second grade students engage in accountable talk during guided reading sessions. This included student to teacher and student to student conversations, which were collected through audio recording and then transcribed into written form for closer study.

Trustworthiness of this study was established through the practice of data triangulation, as I collected multiple forms of data to determine findings (Altrichter, et al., 2008). My work was examined by a research partner and advisor who were able to use a critical lens to ensure my preconceived notions were not impacting my findings.

Procedures

My whole class engaged in their normal Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) (Appendix A) in December, per the district guidelines and this assessment acted as the pre-assessment from which I was able to gauge reading comprehension. I implemented the accountable talk strategy into my instruction starting on February 22, 2016 and instructed and collected data for 4 weeks, 2-3 times a week. I introduced the accountable talk strategy through modeling and demonstration, and the students were able to learn how to “talk” with me and with others as a strategy for meaning making. I then took observation notes using a double journal entry form (Appendix B) during full group discussion for the students with consent as I looked for meaning making in conversations with others and across contents. I also took audio recordings of students in leveled guided reading during their discussions surrounding text. I only used data from those students with consent, and immediately deleted the recordings after they were transcribed as I was able to look more closely at their conversations. The students then engaged in another DRA acting as a post assessment. After, I took their scores to help determine growth in reading comprehension along with any positive changes students are making in regard to oral language development due to structured conversations.

Analysis

I used a coding process as a means to interpret and analyze my data. According to Shagoury & Hubbard (2012) data analysis lets us find patterns and paths to discovery in our work, and the information gathered will lead us on a journey to how our students are truly learning. First, I went through and transcribed my audio recording of reading workshops, both during small group guided reading sessions, and full group interactive read alouds. I made sure to date them to show when they took place, and with which group. I also went through the

written responses the students did over the four week collection period looking for a progression of meaning making, and to determine if they used accountable talk stems or complete sentences in their written expression of ideas. I used this process to help answer the questions of how using the accountable talk strategy impacted my second grade students. I was able to use triangulation as I collected data using audio and written expression during both small group and large group instruction and then compared what the students did in the classroom with their comprehension scores on the Developmental Reading Assessment Scores for both December and March. This also allowed me to gain more accuracy surrounding my research questions.

I categorized the audio recordings by students who used the accountable talk sentence stems and those who did not, as well as who was able to support their thinking by using evidence from the text on their own or in relation to what another student spoke about. I also listened to see who had active listening while waiting for a student to finish their complete thought before responding. Similarly, I took the written reading responses over a four week period and categorized them into students who correctly answered the question versus those that did not, the students used evidence from the text to support their thinking, versus those who did not, and I looked to see if students used complete sentences/thoughts when answering the questions. In looking at the DRA scores for both December and March I looked at comprehension scores to see if their individual comprehension score increased between December and March.

The purpose of my study was to determine how second grade students engage with the accountable talk strategy and how it might impact reading comprehension. I looked to examine the impact of the accountable talk strategy in literacy instruction as a means to better support not only students who come from low socio-economic status, but all students in regard to reading comprehension and oral language development.

I discovered themes within my findings by coding my data and observing my students interacting with accountable talk, as well their discussions surrounding text. I was able to find that over a period of four weeks the students were able to engage in true active listening, which allowed them to make meaning by building the discussion not only around evidence from the text, but each other's thinking. Students were able to use sentence stems to help them interact using the accountable talk strategy, which in turn helped them develop complete sentences in their written responses. Also, the number of students that correctly answered the reading response question increased weekly, and the number of students using text based evidence in their written and oral responses increased weekly.

Finding One: The students were able to engage in true active listening, which allowed them to make meaning by building the discussion not only around evidence from the text, but each other's thinking.

For second grade students it can be difficult to not only remember to stay quiet while another person is speaking, but to be able to keep your hand down, and put your own thinking aside to really listen to what another person has to say. This took practice and with the implementation of a rubric we were able to make it so we could engage in true active listening over time.

During week 1 after the introduction and modeling of the strategy we began to include it into our discussions. Many students could not remember to keep their hands down when one student was called upon to answer a given question. This created a more distractible environment, which either entailed me interrupting to remind students to put their hands down and listen, or students being so focused on what they had to say that they failed to listen to the

other student, making for a conversation of thoughts instead of a connected exchange of dialogue. For example during a discussion on character traits in our first week, I asked the students to describe Snowflake Bentley, a character from one of our interactive read alouds *Snowflake Bentley* (Martin, 2009), and Kim attempted to respond, as she started off saying, “I think Snowflake Bentley was....” And stopped because one of her classmates, Ron, started shouting out his answer while three other students were waving their hands in the air as if they couldn’t hold in their thoughts any longer, leading Kim to forget what she was going to say. After taking a minute to remind the class of our jobs as listeners, I gave Kim another chance to answer. “Oh yea, I was going to say that he is curious because he kept learning more and more about snow.” Being this was the first week of implementation as demonstrations, I took the focus back and pointed out how Kim successfully gave a character trait and told us why. I then asked the class if anyone would like to respond to Kim’s comment. Hands rose again and I chose Roy, who was one of the boys who had previously been raising his hand while Kim was speaking. Roy responded to my question with, “He was a scientist and obsessed with snow.” Amy waits until Roy is done and says, “I kindly disagree Roy, because you only said his job, not how he was as a person.” She continues, “I agree with Kim, but I also think he was kind because he wanted the whole world to see what a tiny speck of snow could turn into.” Roy clearly missed Kim’s response and my pointing out of how she correctly gave a character trait and gave evidence to support her thinking from the text. He missed opportunities to make meaning from the classroom discussion, because he was not actively engaged in listening. Amy, on the other hand, was able to redirect Roy in his thinking, while she commented on Kim’s response as well as added her own thinking using evidence from the text.

Though we kept practicing as a class in the first week it was clear I needed to do something to keep us all accountable. We created a rubric and listed our criteria of sharing and listening during our discussions. Each day we asked ourselves; if we spoke without raising hands, if many voices were heard, if we looked at the speaker and watched the conversation, if we stayed on topic, and if we responded to each other's ideas. We rated ourselves as a class on a 1-4 scale, 1 being hardly at all to 4 being consistent. This allowed us to reflect each day on how the conversation went, and what we could do differently the next day. The first week we implemented the rubric was in week 2, and we scored mostly 2's and some 3's. During week 3 we scored mostly 3's and some 4's and in week 4 we were consistent almost every day with 4's. Creating and using this rubric made all the difference in why my students were able to engage with accountable talk, because without the true active listening piece to the puzzle the whole idea is lost. Gaining true listening to another's thinking took time and practice, and even though some kids in the first week of using the rubric would shout out, or raise their hands when another was speaking, I was able to point to the rubric without saying a word and they were reminded of their job. There were two students who had a hard time being able to put their own thoughts aside to genuinely listen to another student's thought, and for those students we came up with a strategy that allowed them to quickly jot down their idea on a post it note, so that they did not forget. This did not last long though, as they became more confident in being able to think and build off of someone else's thinking. The two students shared with me that there were times when listening to others conversation changed their original thought completely. This shows that active engaged listening can be done with students in a second grade classroom, and doing so leads to having meaningful discussions.

Once students learned to listen intently to what another was saying we started to see a shift in the types of discussions we were having. Instead of students getting stuck in their own thinking, they found the importance in hearing the way somebody else was thinking even if it was different than their thinking after reading the same book. This is where as people our situated literacies and our experiences come into play. One conversation during a guided reading group lesson with Group 2 (Mary, Connor, Colleen and Roy) took place and the students, without help from me, were able to make meaning through their discussion using not only surrounding evidence from the text, but each other's thinking and experiences. We were reading the story of Robin Hood and I asked...

Teacher-What kind of person was Robin Hood?

Colleen-He was a good fighter...

Connor-What do you mean Colleen, like he beat people up?

Colleen-Well I guess he didn't fight people, but he was good at shooting bows and arrows...

Connor-I agree, but I think he was more of like a protector for the poor people that had no money...

Colleen-oh protecting that's a good character trait...

Mary-Yes, I agree with Connor, he robbed the rich and gave it to the poor, so he is a giving person..

Roy-I respectfully disagree because, I don't think a giving person steals from people. My mom says to be nice to people and I don't think that is really nice...

Mary-hmmm, I guess I didn't think of it like that, maybe he could have done a can drive like we did instead...

Colleen-I like Mary's idea about the can drive, but now we aren't sure if he is good or bad?

Through discussion and using the accountable talk strategy not only did Colleen realize she did not use a character trait to describe Robin Hood at first, but I as the teacher did not have to correct her. Connor questioning her and talking it out with her, while giving his own thinking led her to think about the question differently. Mary also was able to agree and add another character trait along the same lines using evidence from the text. It took courage for Roy to have another opinion than the other members in the group, but he shared his opinion and gave evidence from his experiences to support his thinking. This provided a new lens with which the other students were able to see Robin Hood differently. Continuing to use prior experiences and background knowledge, Mary who now saw Robin Hood differently, responded with the idea of the can drive which our class recently participated in to help needy families. She took her thinking to the next level by suggesting a different action Robin Hood could have done to help the poor. This now gave the students something deeper to think about when referring to Robin Hood, and the way he is seen in the Disney movie they are so familiar with. If I were more involved in that conversation I could have tried to lead the students in that direction, but the way the conversation happened on their own shows that students are able to make meaning from one another.

Finding Two: Students were able to use sentence stems to help them interact using the accountable talk strategy, which in turn helped them develop complete sentences in their written responses.

Accountable talk sentence stems were placed on anchor charts around the room and at guided reading tables for students to reference. When we had discussions during reading

workshop I read the students a book using the think aloud model, and allowed students to have a few turn and talks throughout to scaffold meaning. After the story I would frame a question for the students and we would have a discussion using accountable talk to make meaning from it. After, the students would have to write independently answering a question about the text. This framework is one of gradual release; this model according to Weaver (2002) shows a progression of modeled teaching that slowly gives responsibility to the students. Our accountable talk discussions added greatly to the think, pair, share and turn and talk discussions where students were sharing with and only listening to one other student. The students were now sharing with the whole class and using sentence stems to aid them in framing their thinking to use evidence to support what they were saying. For example, the students could say “I think_____ because_____”, and students could respond with “I agree with _____ because_____” or “I respectfully disagree with_____ because_____”.

Each week more students were able to express themselves verbally in our discussions using these sentence stems. For example, Glen was not an avid talker; in class he was quiet and when he did answer he would say one or two words. For example in week 1 as we were talking about how we knew the story of Pecos Bill was a tall tale, Glen responded with, “fake”, and when I asked him to tell me more or give me an example he said, “I don’t know.” This happened not only in discussions, but in Glen’s written responses as well. For example, in week 1 when asked “What type of person Snowflake Bentley was and why?” Glen responded in his written response with, “He loved snow because he did.” Through his responses it was hard to determine if Glen understood the question or even the story. As the weeks progressed Glen would share a little more, and by week three he responded to a discussion in a guided reading session as we were

discussing *Reginald Goes to the Fair* (Rawson, 2013). In giving a retell of the story a student started out by saying;

Dave-In the story it was Reginald and some random kids...

Glen-(raises his hand instead of interrupting) The kid's weren't random, they were his kids.

Dave-I don't remember reading about him having kids.

Glen-Not his kids like puppies, they owned him, he was their dog...

Dave-Oh, can you show me where you read that, maybe I skipped a page...

Glen-(finds the page and reads the passage)

Dave-Well that makes more sense now for why the kids were around.

I was pleasantly surprised that Glen was not only finding his voice, but sharing his thinking. Also his reading response for week 3 was in reference to *I Wanna Iguana* (Orloff, 2004), where the students were asked the purpose of the main character Alex's salutations in the letters he was writing to his mother. Glen responded in writing saying, "I think he did it to convince his mom to get one because your mature son." Even though he struggled with conventions, he was able to explain the purpose and give an example using a sentence stem that we have been using in our discussions in class.

Through coding I was able to see that the students that used the accountable talk stems in our discussions would also state their thoughts and continue with *because* and their evidence in writing their reading responses. This connects with Vygotsky's (1986) theory that links the thought process with different types of talk. "The relation of thought to word is not a thing but a process, a continual movement back and forth from thought to word and from word to thought. In that process, the relation of thought to word undergoes changes that themselves may be

regarded as development in the functional sense” (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 218). Aligning with Vygotsky’s notion of self-talk, their writing began to mimic their speaking as they would answer the question and then further their thinking or opinion, or they would find a way to comment on or connect with the story using their own background knowledge. For example, when answering a question in regard *Hey, Little Ant* (Hoose, 1998) the reading response question asked “Why is it important that the ant tries to persuade the boy to understand his side?” Dave answered using accountable talk stems in his writing saying, “I think that the ant tried to persuade the boy so that the boy could see how the ant feels so maybe he won’t step on him. The little ant said hey if you were me how would you feel if I stepped on you! I think the ant is smart, I would do the same thing, just like when my mom asks me how my brother feels when I pick on him to get me to stop.” Not only did Dave answer the question in a complete sentence and using evidence from the text to support his answer, he furthered his own opinion and made a connection to the ant and his own situation, which shows deep thinking in regards to the text. When students can make personal connections to stories they gain a deeper meaning.

Finding Three: The number of students who correctly answered the reading response questions increased each week.

One goal of a reading response question is that the students are able to have gained enough understanding from the text and the conversation surrounding the text to be able to correctly answer the question. Reading response questions are meant to be deep questions that ask students to think beyond the literal comprehension of the text. Whether the questions ask students to make inferences, determine theme or look at character traits, students tend to have a hard time looking beyond the literal. The accountable talk discussions gave new light to students

being able to think about the text more deeply, because we were talking about the text more deeply and many students were engaging in this discussion. During week 1, 17 out of 22 students were able to correctly answer the reading response question for our interactive read aloud. Week 1 again was where we were working with the accountable talk strategy, but were still missing that active and engaged listening piece. During week 2 the numbers rose to 18/22 and continued in week 3 to 20 out of 22 and in the fourth week every single student was able to answer the reading response question correctly (please see Figure 1 below).

Correct Reading Response Answers

Week	Number of Students
1	17/22
2	18/22
3	20/22
4	22/22

Figure 1. Weekly Progression of students out of 22 who correctly answered a reading response question correctly after accountable talk discussion. The figure illustrates an increase in number of correct answers over time and use of accountable talk.

Without having that meaningful discussion using accountable talk beforehand I would have never had all my students able to answer those deep questions correctly, but I was confident when it came to that independent writing piece during week 4 that my students understood the question and how to answer it based on our prior discussion. I saw that also in guided reading groups that the students were able to answer correctly questions beyond the text both verbally and in their writing journals after having a discussion using accountable talk. For example the reading response question in week 2 asked students to give a character trait with supporting evidence for *Snowflake Bentley* (Martin, 2009). Cory wrote, “hes trying to get people to look at

snow.” His response does not show Cory has understanding of character traits or gained meaning from the story.

In week 3 after reading and discussing the purpose of Alex’s salutations in his letters to his mom in *I Wanna Iguana* (Orloff, 2004), using evidence to support his thinking Cory responded with, “he wanted to write it to convince his mom and make her think twice.” That reasoning had come up in our discussion of why Alex might have chosen the salutations he did when signing his letters, as another way to make his mom think twice, and even though Cory did not support his answer with evidence I was able to see what he got out of our discussion as he was able to correctly make sense of the question and relate it to our discussion using accountable talk, where he was engaged in what others were saying even though he did not share during that discussion.

In week 4 after reading *Earrings!* (Viorst, 1993), we discussed how the little girl in the story tried very hard to convince her parents to let her get her ears pierced. The conversation turned from how the girl was a whiny brat, to how she was determined, and never gave up. Cory was able to share his thinking during that discussion and said, “I agree that the girl is whiny and that she never gives up, because she uses throwing a fit and crying as a way to try and change their minds.” After more discussion, the students had to then write a response in regard to one theme that the author is trying to share with the reader, using text evidence as support for their answer. Cory wrote, “I think the theme is determination because it is about a girl that never gives up and begs and cries and throws fits and makes crazy promises about walking the dog every day for a year and they still say no.” Not only was Cory able to answer the question correctly, but he used evidence from the conversation to help him make sense of the question. Even though he thought that the little girl was bratty, he was able to make the

connection that she still showed determination even though she may have done it in a different way. This demonstrates how important meaningful conversations about text are as the goal is to help students come to their own understandings while listening to others' opinions and reasoning. He even used some of the exact language said by another student in his response showing the promotion of oral language skills. This was the case with many students as the weeks progressed both in guided reading and during full group discussions.

Finding Four: The number of students using text based evidence in their written and oral responses increased each week.

As much as having a correct answer on a reading response question is important, the true understanding comes when a student can support their answer with evidence from the text. Prior to using the accountable talk strategy I had a steady, small group of students who would support their thinking both in group discussions, and when answering a reading response question. Starting in second grade we teach our students the importance of using text evidence to support their thinking, and that only becomes more of a focus as they continue on their academic journey, specifically on state assessments where students have to make an inference and use details in the text to support what they say. This is an even greater reason why this piece of the puzzle on making meaning through text is so important, even in second grade.

After the first week of the introduction of accountable talk I had 7 out of 22 students support their thinking using text evidence after making a claim. This may have only been about 2 more students than had already been consistent with using text evidence. Week 2 is when we really started to focus on our listening with the implementation of the rubric, which allowed for students to get more comfortable with not only using accountable talk stems to explain themselves, but it allowed for them to back up their statements. More students would use text

evidence in their discussions and in the second week the number of students who used text based evidence to support their thinking in week 2 raised to 13 out of 22 students. This pattern continued in week 3 with 15 out of 22 students, and week 4 with 19 out of 22 of my students successfully using evidence to support their thinking in completed a reading response question (please see Figure 2 below).

Number of Students Using Evidence to Support Thinking in Reading Responses

Week	Number of Students
1	7/22
2	13/22
3	15/22
4	19/22

Figure 2. Weekly Progression of students out of 22 including evidence to support thinking in answering reading response questions after accountable talk discussion. The figure illustrates an increase over time in number of students supporting their thinking with evidence as they answer reading response questions after discussions with accountable talk.

During our full group conversation after reading *Earrings!* (Viorst, 1993), I asked the students what Sophie's opinion was and how they knew. This was a conversation that started with Ron, and shows his progression of understanding using evidence from the text and others thinking to make sense of the story himself.

Teacher-What was Sophie's opinion in the story *Earrings!* (Viorst, 1993), and how do you know?

Ron-I think she is just annoying...

George-Well I agree a little with Ron that she got kind of annoying, but it was because she wanted to get earrings so bad and no one cared so she got mad and cried.

Kay-I think that her opinion was that she should get hers ears pierced and that she was old enough, but she didn't act old enough. I would have gotten grounded.

Anne-I kindly disagree because I think she was mad that no one was listening to her or her opinion of wanting earrings. I bet you would be annoying too if you wanted something bad enough.

Ron-I didn't really care about her wanting earrings, because I don't like that stuff, but I begged for a new Star Wars toy for like a week before. I thought that I should get it because I was doing good in school and was helping make my bed. That's like her opinion, but she was still annoying, maybe I was too, but I got the toy!

Ron was then successfully able to answer the reading response question independently, in his own words paraphrasing the conversation he was a part of and using text based evidence as well as his own situated literacies to understand Sophie in the book. Ron's written answer to the question "What was Sophie's opinion in the story *Earrings!* (Viorst, 1993), and how do you know?" was, "Sophie really wanted earrings like kids sometimes want toys and she thought she should get them because she was a big girl and she kept asking her mom and dad but no one cared so she got mad she threw a fit and cried and that didn't help." This shows Ron making sense of his initial thinking in relation to the thinking of other students as he held on to his idea about Sophie throwing a fit, but he had more understanding of why as he connected it to a time he wanted something.

Day by day our conversations got stronger, both in full group and during small guided reading groups. As the students were building off each other's ideas and making sense of different books, I saw more than just text evidence used to help support their claim. Students were using their own life experiences and understandings of the world to help them think deeply

about text. This was their connection piece. It helped make their conversations turn in different directions when they used experiences, but they were able to relate it back to the book, and why they thought the way they did. It was incredible to see as I watched students not only build upon their understanding, but they were building relationships and making connections, just as Ron and his peers did when talking about wanting something so bad, and how someone should act when they feel they are being unheard. Those are the situations the students can relate to and what they will remember. If they can connect their lives to a character in a story that helps them do more than make meaning: it helps them empathize, sympathize and ultimately understand the character. If they are unable to connect with a character then they are able to listen to others and gain perspective around the situation. This creates a new avenue where rigorous thinking beyond the literal text can take place.

Kim is one student who showed unbelievable growth in the short four weeks. She was a student who was open during discussions, and not afraid to share her thinking with the class. She took part in our accountable talk conversations and slowly used our discussion to help her in giving a reading response with not only correct answers, but evidence to support her thinking and complete sentences to provide organization, readability and flow just as if she was having a conversation. In week 2 after our discussion around *Snowflake Bentley* (Martin, 2009), the students had to independently answer what type of person Snowflake Bentley was and what evidence the author provided to support their answer. We had been talking about character traits the week beforehand and I was looking for the students to give me a character trait to describe Snowflake Bentley and be able to support it from the text. Kim's answer was, "He never gave up no matter what attitude anything put him in." This answer lacked a character trait, evidence and her response was confusing.

In week 3 we read *I Wanna Iguana* (Orloff, 2004), and engaged in a discussion using accountable talk surrounding the purpose of the main character Alex's salutations in the letters to his mom. During the independent reading response after our discussion Kim answered, "he wanted to say your smart and mature kid Alex because he wanted to convince his mom and make his mom think twice." In just one week's time, Kim showed improvement as she answered the question correctly and used evidence from the text to support her thinking. Her response is still a little confusing as she does not have complete sentences down, but the growth is evident in her response.

During our final week we read the story *Earrings!* (Viorst, 1993) and held discussions using accountable talk. The students discussed the main character Sophie's opinion and reasoning and we discussed theme. Their final reading response was in regard to theme and the students knew I was looking for more than one detail to answer the question of, "What is one theme that the author is trying to share with us in the story? How do you know?" Kim's response had drastically changed since week 2 as she wrote, "The girl in the story *earrings!* shows determination by the time she said I will walk the dog every day for a year even though you're supposed to always do it. Another reason to be determined because she said she would be nice to her little sibling for six months or even a year! And p.s. that is very very hard to do for even a hour!" Kim was able to show a strong understanding of a theme in the book, and she was able to support her claim, using complete sentences, and both evidence from the text and evidence from her situated literacies as she also has a dog and a younger sibling. The accountable talk discussion with others, paired with her background knowledge, helped her to show true meaning of the text and ways Sophie was showing determination. Many students had growth in

their writing as the weeks went on and our confidence with using accountable talk increased. These were only a few examples of the growth made.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine how second grade students interact with the accountable talk strategy, and how the strategy might impact reading comprehension. This study was focused around the following research questions:

- *How might the introduction of “Accountable Talk” strategy impact students’ reading comprehension?*
- *How do 2-grade students engage in “Accountable Talk” during reading workshop?*

During this four week study I found that my second grade students were able to understand and use the accountable talk strategy and in doing so it helped them to make deeper meaning of a text. This was not limited to students of a specific socio-economic status or reading level, showing that meaning making happens through the process of thought and talk to support students from any background.

Data analysis revealed that student learning needs to be collaborative, proving the importance of social interactions in literacy experiences as students grapple with text through meaningful discussions (Mikyung, Crosson, & Resnick 2005). Data also showed that engaged listening makes a difference in building discussion and connections as students make meaning through shared experiences to assist in purposeful reading (Dooley, 2011). Engaged listening to another's thoughts allows for a different take on a text, which allows for conversation where students have to look at their thoughts in relation to other students and then come to a new conclusion based on all ideas and perspectives discussed. Lastly I found that the accountable

talk strategy increases reading comprehension skills as students were able to take the time to talk out their ideas, hear other's thinking and relate all ideas to their own situated literacies. This aligns with Bohm's (1996) idea that through dialogue students come to an understanding of themselves, others, and the text. This strategy proved to be the avenue that helped students look beyond the literal as they supported their thinking surrounding text and in doing so the students were able to gain a deeper purpose for reading.

Conclusions

Student learning needs to be collaborative.

The data collected in this study demonstrate the importance of student collaboration as each day the students engaged in dialogue exchanging ideas and perspectives about how they made sense of a text, based on evidence from the text and their own background knowledge. This allowed students to not only see things in a different way, but it helped lead them down a path of posing deeper questions in which they asked others to explain their thinking, or why they believed a certain way. In doing this it not only helped students gain a deeper meaning of a text, but also some understanding of the person they were engaging in conversations with. According to Heyman (1983), the relationship between meaning and context must be looked at as in how we make sense of the complex classroom environment. Through collaboration the students and the teacher are building understanding through interactions, and in asking each other questions we are asking one another to share their knowledge as a contribution to our discussion and in doing so students are able to use the new information to deepen their understanding of the text. In reading the same text comes a shared stock of knowledge, but when we add different perspectives based on life experiences it takes that shared stock of knowledge further as we open the confines of our limited thinking. Learning through interactions also

provides motivation for students who are eager to talk, but through specific questioning the teacher can allow students to talk with their peers and make meaning at the same time.

This collaboration also helped the students broaden their vocabulary and therefore further develop their oral language skills through classroom talk where the students were able to engage in modeling language and using a “revoicing” strategy (Mikyung, Crosson, & Resnick 2005, p. 29). According to Mikyung, et al. (2005), revoicing allows students to reformulate what another student has said, and in using sentence stems to build off of another’s thinking students tend to repeat part of what another has said and reformulate their words to then explain their own thinking in regard to someone else. Hearing and using someone else’s words in context allows students to use the same words while gaining meaning of those words, creating literacy rich experiences and adding more words to their vocabulary. This creates a social framework using language to promote learning, as students have to justify their thinking. They must move from analyzing and interpreting the text in their minds to being able to express themselves verbally, and then further as they listen and build off of how others interpreted and analyzed a text. Through collaboration and allowing the students to talk they are given more opportunity to further their thinking as opposed to if they only were able to look at a text through their own eyes.

Engaged listening makes a difference in building discussion and gaining perspective.

Through my research I was able to determine the importance of true active and engaged listening as a way for students to make meaning and build discussion surrounding multiple views. It is easy for students to get stuck in their own thinking and when that happens it limits their understanding, so by students putting their own thinking aside to genuinely listen to what someone else has to say they are able to gain a new perspective and then rethink their own

thoughts and ideas in relation to new ideas. By teaching my students the importance of listening it changed the way we interacted as a classroom and the value we gave to others thoughts, even if they were different than our own. In today's world if you have something to say you need to be able to back it up, and that is what the students learned how to do. This in itself created meaningful discussions that were supported by evidence or inferences from the text as well as personal experiences.

According to Rost (1990), listening is more than hearing, and in turn becomes a form of comprehension on its own where students need strategies in how to be good active listeners, instead of passive listeners. When we model good listening and teach how to give positive feedback through sentence stems, we create the proper environment needed for students to become open enough to share their thinking and for the listeners to make sense of multiple views. This also supports rigorous thinking as active listening reinforces necessary skills of paraphrasing what another has said, asking questions to further one's understanding, and the ability to communicate feelings. These skills are not only necessary in school, but these are life communication skills that affect our social relationships.

Accountable talk increases comprehension.

The results of my study show that the accountable talk strategy increased the students' ability to make meaning from text. If comprehension means that students not only understand the text, but be able to interpret and analyze what is being said, then they may need more support than only themselves and the text to do that when rigor is involved (Mikyung, Crosson, & Resnick, 2005). Accountable talk creates the time and space for a deeper understanding to be made where students are able to have their own thoughts, and listen to how others make sense of things using their own evidence. To be able to not only think about something, but to verbally

express it to others with evidence to support that thinking immediately furthers the process of making meaning from a text.

We can teach reading comprehension skills to students, but until we teach students to have a meaningful dialogue where engaged listening is just as important as sharing, one cannot move beyond the text to self relationship. Hasset (2010) suggests that reading is “not just a matter of reading the word, but rather, a matter of interpreting and representing meaning across various contexts and audiences” (p. 90). By allowing for students to talk and build ideas reading remains meaningful, and not just something that one does alone. There are times when understanding links to a social context where that meaning needs to be built surrounding discussion. I found that reading became more fun and motivational for my students as they were allowed to discuss their ideas and listen to others, which gave them new information to make sense of and process. When it came time for the students to answer reading response questions after our discussions using accountable talk, it was evident that the students were able to take the content of our discussions, the shared knowledge of the text, and their own background knowledge to formulate a well elaborated response with evidence to support their thinking. This is where as teachers we determine if the student truly understood not only the question, but the text. We need students to come to their own meaning and conclusions, and through discussion using accountable talk, reading comprehension can be seen as, “thinking that is a dynamic and continuous process of thought, rather than a series of pre-packaged skills” (Smith, 2010, p. 66). This idea promotes metacognition, and allows students to take in all information and come to their own reasonable understanding of a text.

Implications for Students

Students need to be given maximum opportunities to talk.

In the traditional classroom approach the teacher talks and teaches while the students listen and retain information. Research tells us that students must be able to make sense of information through collaboration with others in a social construct. Mikyung, Crosson, & Resnick (2005) state that reading comprehension must be collaborative and students need the opportunity to talk out their thinking in order to make sense of it. Only when we can express our thoughts and listen to another's can we gain true understanding. This is where Bohm's (1996) "true negotiation of meaning" comes in as students build upon other's ideas using critical thinking skills to make meaning from what another says in regards to their own thinking (p. 2). A text can be read through one lens, but what a world of ideas our students would miss if they weren't allowed to share their thinking and experiences to help themselves and others create a deeper meaning. I saw my students blossom the more they talked to one another. It was more than I could have hoped for, as I witnessed students gain motivation in regards to text and speaking, as well as learn how to listen to one another and respectfully disagree on things. These are life skills and social skills that even many adults lack, imagine if we used this as a life strategy and meaningful discussions and true engaged listening became the norm. Learning must be seen as a social and collaborative process.

Implications for Teachers

Teachers can use student talk as a way to learn more about how students are making meaning.

By allowing students to talk, the teacher can actively listen to what they are saying, and in listening the teacher can determine how the students are thinking about a text. This gives the teacher more information on if a student understands the text, or if there are any misconceptions, but it also allows the teacher to see how students interact and make meaning from each other. Even if a student has a misconception or thinks about the text in one way, the teacher can determine if the students can expand their thinking and try to see things from another point of view. The teacher can also create individual student goals surrounding speaking and listening based on their needs and in regards to the standards. According to Cross (2013), we must listen to our students to be a well-informed educator, but also to get to know them and their thoughts and opinions as a means to create a supportive and comfortable learning community. Only then can we truly create instruction based on what our students' needs.

In listening to my students I saw them grow over the weeks. I was able to tell which students were understanding the text and those that were not, I was able to tell who was using active listening and engaging in conversations and who wasn't. It gave me a different view on my class and in turn I was able to witness the students learn from one another. Students opened their thinking and used evidence to defend their thoughts. In really listening to conversations I was able to then look at the reading responses and see how they created new understandings based on a full class discussion. As teachers sometimes we get stuck in the teach mode, but in stepping back to listen we can learn so much from our students instead of wondering what their thoughts are we let them express them and give them a voice in their own learning.

Teachers can use effective questioning as a means to spark conversation leading to rigorous thinking.

Higher level questioning is crucial to deeper thinking, and it can be easy to ask literal questions based on the surface of the text, but students must be able to think beyond the text. By asking open ended questions we allow our students to think deeply about the text, making inferences and using evidence to support their thinking. This also calls for more than a two word response asking students to use and develop their language skills. According to Scull, Paatsch, & Raban (2013), open ended questions are the way to engage students in these important conversations which promote oral language development and higher level thinking strategies encouraging students to “predict, infer, evaluate, and give opinions” (p. 85). Deep and open ended questions followed by meaningful discussions allow students to make connections to their life experiences and connect their social and school literacies to gain true understanding.

When teachers ask questions they are modeling the types of questions we want students to be thinking about, and in doing so we model how to ask questions of each other. Through accountable talk students shared their thinking, and if another student did not feel they understood they used specific talk stems to help ask questions to clarify and better understand someone else’s thinking. By the teacher starting with a deeper question, the students only followed in their questioning of each other, and in reformulating another’s response they aimed to clarify and gain meaning. According to Scull et al. (2013), teachers who use complex forms of language help their students develop “growth in their command over complex syntactical structures in language” (p. 87). I saw this as my students used the talk stems to help them verbally express their thinking, but this also transferred to their writing as my students over time were able to answer the reading response questions using complete sentences.

Limitations

The limitations of this study include time, and member checking. Due to time constraints this research was conducted in 4 weeks to implement the strategy and collect data, on a classroom size of 22 students. Therefore to generalize these results for a larger group of students it would need to be done with more students at different grade levels. This time frame only allows for 4 weeks of data collection and a shortened time to analyze data. Also, I was the only researcher conducting the study, and I was unable to get other's perspective or feedback during the collection and analysis of data.

Suggestions for Future Research

Based on my research, I will continue to use the accountable talk strategy in my classroom and expand it to all subjects and content areas. This will be the way my class has discussions from now on. In doing so myself or other researchers could collect data across the content areas and see if accountable talk helps support other literacies, specifically in mathematics, when accountable talk is used. I will continue to look into growth in my students' writing during writer's workshop to see if there is growth in sentence structures and word choice. I will start each year off with teaching my students accountable talk and it will be the framework for which my students will learn to interact with one another. Based on the impact the accountable talk strategy had on classroom management and student motivation in my classroom, a suggestion would be to look into how accountable talk can affect classroom management, students' socialization and how it builds a learning community.

Overall Significance

This study is important as it looks at a strategy that would support all students regardless of learning gaps and socioeconomic status. It gives teachers a strategy that supports not only oral language development, but reading comprehension and socialization. The results of this research show that any student can show growth in these areas by taking the time to be accountable for meaningful listening and discussions to deepen meaning. This study can be used by multiple grade levels and cultures to best take back some control as we support students in light of the rigorous standards to help them be successful.

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Appendix A

Teacher Observation Guide

Game Day

Level 18, Page 1

Name/Date _____

Teacher/Grade _____

Scores: Reading Engagement ____/8
Independent Range: 6–7

Oral Reading Fluency ____/16
 11–14

Comprehension ____/28
 19–25

Book Selection

Text selected by:

☐ teacher☐ student**1. READING ENGAGEMENT**

(If the student has recently answered these questions, skip this section.)

T: *What kinds of books do you like to read?* _____**T:** *Tell me about one of your favorite books.* _____**T:** *How do you choose the books you read?* _____**2. ORAL READING FLUENCY****INTRODUCTION**

T: *In this story, Game Day, Raccoon helps her friends Otter, Rabbit, and Squirrel get ready for the games. Raccoon isn't too sure what she can do. Please read aloud pages 2 through 5. Show the student where to stop reading at the *.*

RECORD OF ORAL READING

Record the student's oral reading behaviors. Note the student's fluency (expression and phrasing). Be sure to time the student's reading.

Page 2

One morning Raccoon went to the river to wash her face. She saw a stopwatch under some leaves. Raccoon picked up the stopwatch to look at it.

ORAL READING WORDS PER MINUTE, PERCENT OF ACCURACY

Use the student's oral reading time to circle the WPM range.

Word Count: 141

	INTRVN	INSTR	IND	ADV
Minutes:Seconds	3:11 or more	3:10–2:36	2:35–1:39	1:38 or less
WPM	44 or less	45–54	55–85	86 or more

Count the number of miscues that are not self-corrected. Circle the percent of accuracy based on the number of miscues.

	INTRVN	INSTR	IND				ADV	
Number of Miscues	10 or more	8–9	7	5–6	4	3	1–2	0
Percent of Accuracy	93 or less	94	95	96	97	98	99	100

- If the student's score falls in a shaded area for either WPM or Accuracy, STOP! Reassess with a lower-level text.
- If the student is reading below the grade-level benchmark, administer *DRA Word Analysis*, beginning with Task 16, at another time.

3. COMPREHENSION**PREDICTION**

Students do not use the text when making their predictions. Record the student's responses.

T: *Think about the title, the pictures you have seen, and what you have read so far. (Pause) Tell me three things that you think might happen in the rest of this story.*

SILENT READING

T: *Now, it's time to read and enjoy this story by yourself. When you are done, please come to me and I'll ask you to tell me what happened in this story.*

RETELLING

As the student retells, underline and record on the Story Overview the information included in the student's retelling. Please note the student does not need to use the exact words.

T: Close the book before retelling, and then say: ***Start at the beginning, and tell me what happened in this story.***

Story Overview**Beginning**

1. Raccoon found a stopwatch by the river and picked it up to look at it.

Middle

2. Raccoon helped Otter get ready for Game Day by timing him as he swam.
3. Raccoon helped Rabbit get ready by telling him when to start running.
4. Raccoon helped Squirrel get ready by measuring how far she could jump.
5. On her way home, Raccoon felt sad. She didn't feel she could do anything well.
6. The next day was Game Day. Raccoon's friends all won shiny medals.
7. That night the animals had a party. Raccoon felt sad.

End

8. Then Raccoon's friends gave her a shiny medal for helping them.
9. Raccoon was proud of her new medal. She could be a good friend.

If necessary, use one or more of the following prompts to gain further information after the initial retelling. Place a checkmark by a prompt each time it is used.

- ☐ ***Tell me more.***
- ☐ ***What happened at the beginning?***
- ☐ ***What happened before/after _____*** (an event mentioned by the student)?
- ☐ ***Who else was in the story?***
- ☐ ***How did the story end?***

INTERPRETATION

Record the student's responses to the prompts and questions below.

T: ***What do you think the author is trying to tell you in this story?***

REFLECTION

T: ***What do you think was the most important thing that happened in this story?***

T: ***Why do you think that was important?***

4. TEACHER ANALYSIS

ORAL READING

If the student had 5 or more different miscues, use the information recorded on the Record of Oral Reading to complete the chart below.

Student problem-solves words using: <input type="checkbox"/> beginning letter(s)/sound(s) <input type="checkbox"/> letter-sound clusters <input type="checkbox"/> onset and rime <input type="checkbox"/> blending letters/sounds <input type="checkbox"/> knowledge of spelling patterns (analogies) <input type="checkbox"/> syllables <input type="checkbox"/> rereading <input type="checkbox"/> no observable behaviors	Number of miscues self-corrected: ____ Number of miscues not self-corrected: ____ Number of words told to the student: ____	
	Miscues interfered with meaning: <input type="checkbox"/> never <input type="checkbox"/> at times <input type="checkbox"/> often	Miscues included: <input type="checkbox"/> omissions <input type="checkbox"/> insertions <input type="checkbox"/> substitutions that were <input type="checkbox"/> visually similar <input type="checkbox"/> not visually similar
Copy each substitution to help analyze the student's attention to visual information. e.g., <u>stoplight</u> (substitution) stopwatch (text)		

Oral Reading Rate: (Optional) Use the formula below to determine the student's exact oral reading rate. Convert the student's reading time to all seconds.

$$141 \text{ (words)} \div \text{_____ total seconds} = \text{_____ WPS} \times 60 = \text{_____ WPM}$$

DRA2 Continuum

- Circle the descriptors that best describe the student's reading behaviors and responses.
 1. Use your daily classroom observations and the student's responses to the Reading Engagement questions to select statements that best describe the student's level of Reading Engagement.
 2. Use your recorded observations from this assessment to select the statements that best describe the student's Oral Reading Fluency and Comprehension.
- Add the circled numbers to obtain a total score for each section.
- Record the total scores at the top of page 1.

Note: If the Comprehension score is less than 19, administer DRA2 with a lower-level text.

Name/Date _____

Teacher/Grade _____

Level 18, Page 6

DRA2 CONTINUUM		LEVEL 18		TRANSITIONAL READER	
	INTERVENTION	INSTRUCTIONAL	INDEPENDENT	ADVANCED	
Reading Engagement					
Book Selection	1 Selects new texts from identified leveled sets with teacher support; uncertain about a favorite book	2 Selects new texts from identified leveled sets with moderate support; tells about favorite book in general terms	3 Selects new texts from identified leveled sets most of the time; identifies favorite book by title and tells about a particular event	4 Selects a variety of new texts that are "just right"; identifies favorite book by title and gives an overview of the book	
Sustained Reading	1 Sustains independent reading for a short period of time with much encouragement	2 Sustains independent reading with moderate encouragement	3 Sustains independent reading for at least 15 minutes at a time	4 Sustains independent reading for an extended period of time	
Score	2 3	4 5	6 7	8	
Oral Reading Fluency					
Expression	1 Little expression; monotone	2 Some expression that conveys meaning	3 Expression reflects mood, pace, and tension at times	4 Expression reflects mood, pace, and tension most of the time	
Phrasing	1 Reads mostly word-by-word	2 Reads in short phrases most of the time; inappropriate pauses	3 Reads in longer phrases at times; heeds most punctuation	4 Reads in longer, meaningful phrases most of the time; heeds all punctuation	
Rate	1 44 WPM or less	2 45–54 WPM	3 55–85 WPM	4 86 WPM or more	
Accuracy	1 93% or less	2 94%	3 95%–98%	4 99%–100%	
Score	4 5 6	7 8 9 10	11 12 13 14	15 16	
Comprehension					
Prediction	1 Makes unrelated or no prediction(s)	2 Makes at least 1 reasonable prediction related to the text	3 Makes at least 2 reasonable predictions that go beyond the pages read aloud	4 Makes at least 3 thoughtful predictions that go beyond the pages read aloud	
Retelling: Sequence of Events	1 Includes only 1 or 2 events or details (limited retelling)	2 Includes at least 3 events, generally in random order (partial retelling)	3 Includes most of the important events from the beginning, middle, and end, generally in sequence	4 Includes all important events from the beginning, middle, and end in sequence	
Retelling: Characters and Details	1 Refers to characters using general pronouns; may include incorrect information	2 Refers to characters using appropriate pronouns; includes at least 1 detail; may include some misinterpretation	3 Refers to most characters by name and includes some important details	4 Refers to all characters by name and includes all important details	
Retelling: Vocabulary	1 Uses general terms or labels; limited understanding of key words/concepts	2 Uses some language/vocabulary from the text; some understanding of key words/concepts	3 Uses language/vocabulary from the text; basic understanding of most key words/concepts	4 Uses important language/vocabulary from the text; good understanding of key words/concepts	
Retelling: Teacher Support	1 Retells with 5 or more questions or prompts	2 Retells with 3 or 4 questions or prompts	3 Retells with 1 or 2 questions or prompts	4 Retells with no questions or prompts	
Interpretation	1 Little or no understanding of important text implications	2 Some understanding of important text implications; no supporting details	3 Understands important text implications; may include supporting details	4 Insightful understanding of important text implications with supporting details or rationale	
Reflection	1 Identifies an unrelated event; no reason for opinion or no response	2 Identifies a less significant event and/or gives a general reason for response	3 Identifies a significant event and gives relevant reason(s) for opinion	4 Identifies a significant event and gives reason(s) for opinion that reflects higher-level thinking	
Score	7 8 9 10 11 12 13	14 15 16 17 18	19 20 21 22 23 24 25	26 27 28	

Choose three to five teaching/learning activities on the *DRA2* Focus for Instruction on the next page.

DRA2 FOCUS FOR INSTRUCTION FOR TRANSITIONAL READERS**READING ENGAGEMENT****Book Selection**

- ☐ Teach student strategies to select “just right” books for independent reading
- ☐ Introduce student to reading materials from a variety of genres
- ☐ Teach student how to use a reading log to monitor book selection
- ☐ Model/teach how to read for different purposes

Sustained Reading

- ☐ Model and support how to read independently
- ☐ Teach strategies to build reading stamina
- ☐ Develop clear expectations for amount of independent reading
- ☐ Create structures to support reading at home

ORAL READING FLUENCY**Expression and Phrasing**

- ☐ Model and support reading in longer, meaningful phrases with appropriate expression
- ☐ Have student practice appropriate expression with familiar texts
- ☐ Have student participate in choral reading and/or reader's theater
- ☐ Teach student to heed punctuation

Rate

- ☐ Provide materials and time for repeated reading to increase reading rate
- ☐ Teach student to read lower-level and/or familiar texts at an appropriate rate

Accuracy: Word Analysis

- ☐ Support and reinforce self-corrections of miscues
- ☐ Model and support how to take words apart (e.g., onset and rime, syllables) to problem-solve unknown words
- ☐ Teach how to use word chunks and analogies to problem-solve unknown words
- ☐ Provide spelling activities and word sorts to help student recognize patterns in words

COMPREHENSION**Prediction**

- ☐ Teach student how to make predictions based on title and book cover, as well as opening paragraphs and illustrations of texts read aloud
- ☐ Model and support how to use background knowledge to make meaningful predictions

Retelling

- ☐ Model and teach how to retell a story
- ☐ Model and teach how to identify important events to include in a retelling
- ☐ Support retelling a story in sequence
- ☐ Encourage student to use characters' names when retelling a story
- ☐ Model and teach how to identify important details to include in a retelling
- ☐ Model and support using key language and vocabulary from the text in a retelling
- ☐ Model and teach how to create and use story maps to aid retelling

Interpretation

- ☐ Model how to infer during shared reading and read-alouds
- ☐ Teach and share examples of inferences
- ☐ Model and teach student how to think about *Why?* questions while and after reading a text
- ☐ Model and teach how to support inferences with information or examples from the text

Reflection

- ☐ Help student identify important information and/or message in a story
- ☐ Provide opportunities to identify and discuss the important event in a story
- ☐ Demonstrate and teach student how to support opinion with details from the text

OTHER

Page 3

Just then she saw Otter swimming by. He was getting ready for Game Day.

"Raccoon, will you help me?" asked Otter.

"I need someone to time me."

"Yes," said Raccoon. She timed Otter with her stopwatch.

"Thanks for helping me," said Otter.

Page 4

Then Raccoon saw Rabbit running around a track.

"Will you help me?" asked Rabbit. "I need someone to tell me when to start."

"Yes," said Raccoon. "Get ready. Get set. Go!"

After Raccoon helped Rabbit, she started to go home.

Page 5

On the way, she saw Squirrel jumping in the grass.

"Will you help me?" asked Squirrel. "I need someone to measure how far I can jump."

So Raccoon stopped to help Squirrel.

Time: _____ minutes:seconds

Appendix B

Double Journal Entry Form

Raw Data/What I Saw	What I Thought/Interpretation/Reflection